VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Jim Bertel.

The streets of Minsk are quiet a day after Belarusians filled the center of the capital in the biggest protest so far against longtime President Alexander Lukashenko's re-election a week ago.

The country's leader countered with thousands of his own supporters holding their own rally.

AP's Karen Chammas has more.

As Lukashenko's supporters waited for his appearance at the rally, many chanted Lukashenko's nickname of "Batka," or "father."

The president, who spoke at the rally, vehemently rejected any possibility of holding a rerun of the vote as anti-government claimed the election was a sham and alleged results were manipulated.

Meanwhile, as crowds streamed toward the site of an opposition rally about a mile and a half away, the ninth straight day of anti-government rallies, about 7,000 people were arrested over several days of protests, which police harshly tried to put down with clubs, rubber bullets and flash grenades.

Many detainees were later released, complaining of brutality from police while in custody and showing extensive bruises.

I'm Karen Chammas.

Officials in Somalia say ten civilians and one police officer were killed in a gun and bomb attack by Al-Shabaab fighters on Sunday.

Security forces took four hours to regain control of an upscale beachfront hotel in Somalia's capital after five assailants stormed it early Sunday evening.

Ambulance workers at the scene reported that at least 28 people were wounded.

The secretary-general of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council is condemning what he calls "threats" by Iran's president and other Iranian officials towards the United Arab Emirates. This follows the UAE's agreement with Israel to normalize relations.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said the UAE has made a mistake in reaching the deal with Israel.

From Washington, you are listening to VOA news.

Reuters is reporting the United States has surpassed 170,000 coronavirus deaths. The southern states of Florida, Texas and Louisiana lead the rise in fatalities.

The U.S. has more than [4] 5.4 (million) confirmed cases, the highest in the world.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is delaying New Zealand's national elections by four weeks as the country deals with a new coronavirus outbreak.

The election had been scheduled for September 19, but will now be held on October 17.

"Ultimately, the 17th of October, in approximately nine weeks' time, provides sufficient time for parties to plan around the range of circumstances we could be campaigning under."

Opposition political parties have been requesting a delay after a coronavirus outbreak in Auckland last week. The outbreak prompted the government to put the city into a two-week lockdown and halt election campaigning.

On Monday, Democrats opened an unprecedented virtual National Convention to formally make former Vice President Joe Biden their candidate for president.

In normal election years, nominating conventions draw tens of thousands of party faithful for festive events designed to shine a national spotlight on the candidates.

President Trump's Republicans will hold their own virtual convention next week.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is calling lawmakers back into session to vote on funding for the U.S. Postal Service. This follows proposals by the new postmaster general to cut costs.

Democrats fear that the cuts in service are aimed at delaying the delivery of mail-in ballots in the November 3 presidential election.

President Donald Trump has alleged without evidence that voting by mail will lead to election fraud.

White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows denies the president is trying to manipulate the voting process.

And Andretti wins the first Indy 500 pole for the family in 33 years. Now he will lead the field to the green in next Sunday's Indy 500. AP's Julie Walker has more.

Marco Andretti logged a four-lap average of 231 miles per hour in Sunday's qualifying. He had tears in his eyes, with citing advice his grandfather Mario Andretti gave him - "The wind will scare you, but it will never crash you."

Mario Andretti scored the only Indy 500 win for the family in 1969. The August 23 race will be Marco Andretti's 15th attempt.

His own father, Michael Andretti, fell short in 16 tries.

When Marco came up the track Sunday after winning the poll, father and son embraced, then strategized for the big one.

I'm Julie Walker.

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